

The Parable of the Talents

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 0 0] Let us join together in a worship of God, singing to his praise, Psalm 43.
- Psalm 43. We're going to sing the whole psalm. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation, from the unjust and crafty man.
- O be thou my salvation, for thou the God art of my strength, why thrust thou me thee through? For the enemy's oppression, why do I mourning go?
- O send thy light forth on thy truth, let them be guides to me, and bring me to thine holy hill, even where thy dwellings be. Then will I to God's altar go, to God my chiefest joy.
- Yea, God, my God, thy name to praise, my harp I will employ. Why art thou then cast down my soul? What should discourage thee?
- [1 : 0 7] And why with vexing thoughts art thou disquieted in me? Still trust in God, for him to praise, good cause I yet shall have.
- He of my countenance is the health, my God that doth be saved. The whole of this psalm, to God's praise, judge me, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation.
- Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation.
- From the ungodly nation. For thou the Lord, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation.
- For thou the God, O my strength, why trust thou in me be broke?
- [2 : 2 1] For thou the Lord, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation. For thou the Lamb, O God, and pardon my cause against the ungodly nation.
- Let them be guide to me, and bring me to thy holy hill, in where thy wedding see.
- Then will I do God's honor go, to God my cheater's joy.
- Yea, God, my God, I need to praise, my heart thy will employ.
- Why are thou then, Pastor, my soul?
- [3 : 5 4] What should discourage thee? And why with resting thoughts and love, is quieted in me.
- Still trust in God, for him to praise, because I am shall have.
- He of my countenance is the hell, my God that does me save.
- Let us come before God in prayer. Let us pray. Ever blessed God, we give thanks for the opportunity to meet around your word, at this time of worship, that we can consider ourselves to be under your word, that when we read it, or have it read to us, when we consider its contents, and with your grace and endeavour to apply it in our lives, we are most meaningfully under your word.
- And we pray that that would be the case. We bless you and thank you that this is your day, and that you have appointed it for our spiritual good.
- [5 : 5 2] Not just our spiritual good, but our emotional, our mental, even our physical wellbeing is something that benefits from it.

We are being able to come aside from the legitimate concerns of the weekday, our work, whatever it may be, and other issues that pertain to life in general, that we can take time away from these things and rest a while.

Just as we saw our Saviour take time to go apart, to be with you, his Father and God.

And he did so often, not just at the appointed day and hour of prayer and meditation, but it was to his benefit to do it often.

We pray that you would bless us today collectively, remembering your people in particular, all the homes and the families that we are part of.

[7 : 18] We pray for those that have concerns within these families, and within these homes. We know that there are many areas of concern that affect us from time to time, not least of which is concern over the health of our loved ones.

So we remember that any who may be in hospital at this time. We think of those that we know and many that we know nothing about.

We pray for their families that may be concerned for them. Even at this time of pandemic, there are restrictions that curtail visitation, and that itself is a trial.

And we pray for those who have this to contend with, over and above the fears and the concerns that they have for loved ones. Remember those confined to their homes, those who are within homes for the elderly.

We give thanks for all engaged in their care, nurses and doctors and carers. We pray that you would bless them. We continue to remember those affected by COVID-19.

[8 : 35] We are still hearing of people who have succumbed to it and have died. others who are very ill and who have to require hospitalisation.

We pray for those who have to care for them and in so doing it, putting themselves in jeopardy in the way that they are exposed to it. We give thanks for the way in which the virus is being tackled by providing inoculation against it.

We pray that that may prove successful in the near future. We remember the parts of the world that are still suffering greatly because of it, because of their own relative poverty or inability to deal with it on a scale that would make a difference to the population.

So we remember these parts of the world and pray for the spirit of grace and the spirit of charity to be disseminated in the lives of those who govern, so that they might have an interest that is beyond our shores and that focuses on the less privileged and less fortunate.

We pray for those who govern. We pray for our Prime Minister, our First Minister, the various parliaments and ask that you would remind them that they are accountable, not just to the general populace but to the God who has given to them spheres of responsibility that they are ill-equipped to deal with without your grace.

[10 : 20] Is that your grace, for the general populace and the other people who have given to us? You are generous in bestowing grace upon us. Not just saving grace, but the grace that enables men and women who are ignorant of it, to receive your help.

acknowledge it. For the sake of your people you are able to use many tools and many men and women who may be oblivious to the part that they are playing and fulfilling your own desire to do good in the lives of all, that you are able to intervene in lives of people in a positive way and we pray that that would continue. Remember the grieving and the sorrowful, we pray for healing and that wounds that have been made in hearts that they may be bound up with the balm of your own love. We pray for our councils and those who have to deal with the aftermath of the pandemic in the way that businesses are jeopardised and in our own case when we see what are called lifeline services stretched to the limit we pray for mercy and for your own wisdom to be imparted to those in power that we would resort to prayer first and then whatever it is that lies at our hands in order to alleviate the needs of the day. So hear our prayers and enable us to trust in the God of all grace, the one who has provided for us in all our days from birth to the present.

And as long as we have lived in this world, we cannot depart from receiving the goodness that we are we are unworthy of receiving. It surrounds us, it impacts upon us. God's mercies are new each morning, your servant said, and your faithfulness is great. May we acknowledge that and look to the Lord who is the author and finisher of our faith to strengthen it and confirm it, to bring to light your purposes for this world of ours and for those in it. May those who are strangers to you, may they cry out, what must I do to be saved? May you bless your word to that end, pour out your spirit upon us, open the windows of heaven and come down. Court the hearts and the minds as the dew courts, the hills and the mountains around Jerusalem.

We pray, Lord, that you would remember us in mercy. Continue to bless us as we read your word and as we wait upon you and reflect on what we have read. Go before us and pardon every sin in Jesus' precious name we ask it. Amen.

We're going to hear the word of God as we have it in the New Testament scriptures, the Gospel of Matthew Matthew chapter 25 and we're reading from verse 14 and reading down to verse 30.

[13 : 47] Matthew chapter 25 from verse 14 For the kingdom of heaven was as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straight away took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. And so he had, he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things.

Enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents.

[15 : 23] Behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things.

I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine.

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant. Thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And so on. May the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word. To his name be the praise.

I'd like us now to turn to this parable that we have read. The parable of the Tarans. There are two parables in this chapter. The first one is the parable of the ten virgins.

[17 : 34] And the second one is the one that we're going to consider. And then finally we have an account of the judgment at the second day, second coming of Christ. All three have one thing in common. Our Lord is going to come again.

In the first of these the hearer is warned to be watchful. In the second we are warned to be faithful. And in the final section we are taught that the King will come in glory as he judges. He will separate nations, indicative of his power. He will divide the good from the wicked, indicative of his righteousness.

And he will apportion to each the due reward for their deeds, indicative of his justice. As we said we're going to consider the second of these parables, the parable of the talents.

And as we've often said, like all parables, it is meant to convey a primary message, which we have already alluded to, highlighted in the commendation given to the servants.

In verse 21 and verse 23, his Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

[19 : 07] Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord. However, there are also truths that undergird the story and give to it meaning, give meaning, or undergird its meaning, or strengthen the meaning that we are meant to discover in it.

So the first thing I want us to think of is that this passage or parable as taught by the Lord reminds us of the parousia, the second coming of the Lord.

Secondly, we are taught what is expected of the servant as they await for the parousia, as they await his coming.

And thirdly, what the Lord will look for when he does come. The parable describes to us a simple scene.

A man prepares to go on a journey from which he expects to return. He does not specify when he will return, but we can infer that because it is to a far country, it may be some time before he returns.

[20 : 52] And the way the parable unfolds, we are actually told that he takes a long time in verse 19, One thing is certain, the return is not in doubt.

We can think of our Lord's ascension and awaited second coming, because the parable tells us that this is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Long before Jesus came into the world by taking our nature to himself, In his first coming, God allowed his people to know that the incarnation, his birth and life would culminate with his redemptive death on the cross.

But that would not be the end. That same Jesus would rise from the grave and ascend into glory. That is what we are told.

He will come again. We have the words of triumph of the psalmist. In Psalm 68 and verse 18, for example, Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious ascended up on high, and in triumph victorious led captive captivity.

[22 : 30] Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel. Yea, even for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell. In the prophecy of Daniel, in the midst of all the language that is difficult at times to interpret, in chapter 7, we read the following.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion and glory and a kingdom, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed.

While there is much in the symbolism of Daniel that is difficult to understand at times, I don't think there's any question about who the focus of this passage is.

Amongst the many passages in the Old Testament, the Lord is a favourite designation of the Lord Jesus.

[23 : 59] Often he refers to himself as the Son of Man, and he uses that title exclusively to speak of himself.

In the following chapter, chapter 26, in verse 62, just to give you an example of it, we read there in verse 66, I think it is, when Jesus, or verse 64, prior to that, when Jesus is speaking to the High Priest, he is being quizzed by the High Priest concerning who he is.

And the High Priest arose and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? Jesus held his peace, and the High Priest answered and said unto him again, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Christ the Son of God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said, Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? Behold now we have heard his blasphemy.

[25 : 27] In other words, what Jesus was saying there, that was heard by the High Priest that stimulated such anger, was clearly understood by the High Priest to mean what we understand, that these words that Jesus applied to himself indicated that he was the Messiah, he was the Son of God, and that he was going to come again.

Now there are many passages that speak of that. But here in this parable, we are told that the Kingdom of Heaven is like this.

And then the story unfolds. This Lord went on a far journey. And prior to him going on that journey, he speaks to his servants, three servants, and he gives them instructions.

So that's the second thing I want us to think about. Before the Master goes to the far country, he summons his servants. And three are identified.

And he gives to each of them a sum of money. The value is not really important. Some of the Divines tell us, and varying amounts are specified.

[26 : 52] But, as I said, the monetary value that he gives to them is not what's important.

Because he gives to each some money, but not the same amount. He could have given them all the same amount, but he doesn't. For whatever reason.

Because he says that he gave to them according to their ability, their several ability.

The Master decides on the amount based upon that. And it's not explained what is expected of them. But they understood that based on the fact that the money was his, and as his servants they were to do with it whatever it was that would be of profit to their master.

The one who buried it is the one exception. Now, if nothing was expected, the commendations given, as well as the condemnation, would be irrational.

[28 : 14] But two are considered good and faithful, and the other was considered wicked and lazy. So it is important for us to recognise that what the Lord gave to them was his own, and as his servants it was their duty and privilege to use it for his advantage.

If there was a hint of merit in what they did, then the reward would have reflected that. But that is not the case.

As we live our lives as Christians in the world, if that is what we are, it is clear to us that we are waiting for that Saviour of ours to come.

And the question for us is, are we living our lives as left by him to fulfil whatever it is that he expects us to do in his name?

Do we constantly compare ourselves to others and become lazy because others have been given more than us to do? Do we still have to do? Do we still have to do? But that is not really our business.

[29 : 33] We could be like the man here, or we could be looking at why one person got more than the other. If you were thinking when I was looking at this of Peter and John, if you remember when following the resurrection, Peter had an encounter with the Lord and the Lord challenged him as to his love for him, if you remember.

And Peter took umbrage from his questioning initially. You know, I can read that passage with you.

Chapter 21 in the Gospel of John, verse 15. When they had died, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. You remember this encounter and how Peter was grieved by the Lord's questioning often.

But after all was said and done, the Lord again told him what awaited him.

[31 : 05] Verily, verily I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest, whither thou wouldest. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee where thou wouldest not.

This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me.

Now it's what follows this, what comes after this, that I was thinking of. Peter turning about, see the disciple Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? It's as if Peter is curious as well, this is what you've said is going to happen to me.

This is how I'm going to spend my days, and this is how my days are going to end. But what about him? How is he going to go on? Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?

[32 : 23] Follow thou me. In other words, he is more or less again correcting Peter for his curiosity.

Maybe it was nothing better than curiosity. But it wasn't his business. That's what the Lord was saying. Whatever I have given to somebody else to do, that is for them.

You do what you've been given. You do what's expected of you. It is a weakness that marks us all out. We are to do all we can.

Others to do all they can. If that happens, then so will this. We will receive the Lord's well done. Both men received the same word of approval because they had done what was asked of them.

But one did not. The two, the one who received five talents, the one who received two talents and doubled it, they received the commendation of God.

[33 : 31] And the one who buried it did not. C.H. Spurgeon wrote, Jesus knew that it was the servant with one talent who was most exposed to the temptation to do nothing, because he could only do little.

Now there's a thought. Sometimes we think of ourselves, well, we're not really equipped to do much. There are others who are better at things and better at doing things or doing things better than us, so we end up doing nothing at all.

There may be many who think like that, not just underselling themselves, but leaving to others what they could and should be doing. The question is asked, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Jesus asked that question in the context of the parable of the importunate widow. It seems that Jesus wants his disciples to know that it will be the case that his return will be at a time of church declension.

That it won't be a world where Christians are anticipating the coming of the Lord. R.C. Sproul, in his comments on that passage which we have just quoted, who makes this observation elsewhere, we are told that he will appear when the strength and faith of his people will be at a low hip.

[35 : 19] Some historians have noted that our day is one of the most difficult periods in church history, in terms of the vitality of the church itself. It is marked not so much by faithfulness as by faithlessness.

And if what is at the heart of this parable is a requirement to live in faith until the Son of Man comes, that is a charge that needs to be considered and thought long and hard about.

The man that is condemned for his inaction accuses his master of being hard and measureless, yet he received a talent from him, something he had no right to expect, and it was a privilege for him to serve his master in this way.

In the parable finally, Jesus wishes us to understand that the return of the Lord will have consequences, and excuses will not do.

Bishop Ryle stated many years ago something of the nature of the judgment that awaits, that awaits this world. It's not something that we can ignore.

[36 : 58] And it's at the heart of this parable, when Jesus is speaking to us here in these words of commendation, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over many things.

I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord, and so on. There is clearly there in this passage the sense of what the judgment of Christ involves.

Jesus promises in the scripture a crown to all his own, a crown of life, a crown of glory, a crown of righteousness. In the parable there is a promise of glory, but also a participation in the joys of the Lord.

The Spurgeon says not so much that they will have a joy of our own, which we will if we are his, but that we will enter into his joy.

If you remember the scripture reminds us that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. And that is often mistakenly spoken of as the angels' joy.

[38 : 15] And it's not that the angels won't have a joy, but there it is speaking of the joy that is in the presence of these angels. There is a joy that God has and that the Saviour has.

And that is something that every believer will enter into. The delight that the service that is given to the Master will give to them.

But the unfaithful servant will have no joy. His end is solemn indeed. And to every one that hath shall be given.

And he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Some of the Divines say these verses are to do with the Church.

[39 : 29] And those who are members of the Church. Members of the Body of Christ. And there's a variety of hues in the understanding that is there.

If a person is a believer in Jesus Christ, there is no doubt that there are some believers who are not as exercised as they could be in the service of God.

And that is something that they suffer loss because of. They do not enjoy the privilege of being a diligent servant of the Master.

They do not enjoy the delight that there is in doing all that they can with his help. But there are also those who are part of the service of God.

And this is perhaps what some allude to anyway. That there are those who think themselves to be servants who are not. What Jesus is teaching us here that this passage focuses upon the world in which we live that is anticipating or in the anticipatory period of the second coming of Christ.

[40 : 55] And faithfulness within that period is what will be rewarded. Faithlessness will be punished.

Loss will be suffered. Eternal loss is possible, if not the only result for those who are left of Christ. May God solemnise these words to us that we contemplate where we stand with regard to our own fulfilment of the duties that arose in him.

May he bless us, his thoughts. Let us pray. Most merciful God, we pray that you would strengthen our arm to do all in our power. That whatever you have given us to do, that we may do it with all our heart, with all our strength.

Bless your people as they come to terms with all that you have given to them to do. And may they be deflected and distracted from doing anything that would not be to your glory.

Go before us, cleanse from sin. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen.